



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Headquarters

419 Decatur Street New
Orleans, LA 70130

Jean Lafitte National
Historical Park and
Preserve.

504-589-3882 phone
504-589-3864 fax

Chalmette Battlefield Task Force Minutes

Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting July 30, 2003 at 3:00 p.m.
Location: Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve
 Chalmette Battlefield
 8606 West St. Bernard Hwy.
 Chalmette, Louisiana 70043

Task Force Members Present:

Mr. Eric Cager
Cpt. Bonnie Pepper-Cook
Mrs. George W. Davis
Mr. Anthony Fernandez, Jr.
Mr. Alvin W. Guillot
Mr. Drew Heaphy, CPA
Ms. Elizabeth McDougall, Chairperson
Ms. Faith Moran
Mr. Paul V. Perez
Col. John F. Pugh, Jr.
Supt. Geraldine Smith
Mr. Tim Bemisderfer, Federal Designated Officer for Regional Director
Southeast Regional Office

Task Force Members Absent:

Mr. Michael L. Fraering

Next Meeting: Wednesday, October 22, 2003
 Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve
 Chalmette Battlefield
 8606 West St. Bernard Hwy.
 Chalmette, Louisiana 70043

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Elizabeth McDougall at the Chalmette Battlefield. The 5/28/03 meeting minutes were presented for approval. Mr. Drew Heaphy motioned to accept the minutes and Col. John F. Pugh, Jr., seconded the motion. The minutes were accepted.

Ms. McDougall discussed an E-mail

Ms. McDougall discussed an e-mail she received from Steven Dietz, an amateur historian. He was inquiring as to where the locations of the British soldiers are buried and of the lack of a monument to them. He expressed a desire to help establish a memorial to the British soldiers. His point was that this was the force that defeated Napoleon's forces in France and Spain yet were defeated in the Battle of New Orleans. David Muth stated that the British soldiers may have been buried near the British Headquarters of the Chalmette Plantation and that it is probably part of the Kaiser site. It was noted that it is easier to say where they are not than where they are buried. Ms. McDougall asked if there was a monument to the British at present at the Denis de La Ronde Ruins / Pakenham Oaks site? Ms. Davis noted that the Chalmette Chapter of the Daughters of 1812 would be interested in a cooperative effort to establish a memorial. Mr. Hyland, St. Bernard Parish Historian stated that St. Bernard Parish is the owner of the ruins.

Federal Designated Officer- Planning Team update and EA consultants introduction

Ms. McDougall introduced Tim Bemisderfer, the Federal Designated Officer, for a planning team update. He welcomed everyone and introduced the Environmental Impact Study consultants Kate Ange, project manager from HNTB, Suzi Boltz, environmental specialist from EA Technologists, and Krista Snider, cultural resource specialist from New South Associate. They will assist with impact analysis from the task force recommended General Management Plan alternatives.

Discussion of future uses of the Beauregard House

Ms. McDougall opened the discussion to ideas for use of the Beauregard House. Charles Pecquet, the living history volunteer representative, requested clarification of the use of the house by the living history volunteers. Park staff had indicated to the volunteers that they could not use the house.

Supt. Smith stated that she is available to discuss present interpretative issues with the living history volunteers. She indicated that the present forum for the task force is to identify future uses of the facility. The question she wants the task force to consider is "What is the best use of the facility in the future?" One suggestion is to use the 2nd floor of the building for educational groups.

T. Bemisderfer added that all possible uses can be "...put on the table" for the task force to consider as possible recommendations for future interpretive uses.

W. Hyland noted the present condition of the walls and plaster is due to the fact that there used to be air conditioning and heating in the building but they have not been functional for years. He asked if we could identify and develop a funding source to replace them. How can the house be used, as a revenue source to help offset the costs of renovations was the concern?

G. Smith noted that there are NPS historic leasing programs at some parks. Proposals however would have to go through National Park Service review and approval to determine specific adaptive uses. Buildings would also have to be restored to original status. D. Herrera added that

there are some ways to turn this into revenue producing venue i.e., concessions. At the present time if a local historical society wanted to sponsor an event, the park could only charge to recover costs.

Col. Pugh stated the engineers at Jackson Barracks have a great deal of experience renovating; restoring; and maintaining similar buildings. They would be a good resource to the park for "how to" and lessons learned on future projects for any renovations.

There was a question of the overall stability of the structure. Frank Mobley, Chalmette maintenance foreman, noted they are waiting for a report from Denver Service Center on the structural integrity of the building. The initial indications are that it is structurally sound.

Gardens and Landscaping

Ms. McDougall noted that there were beautiful gardens around the house in the past. There was some discussion on who would plant and maintain them. It was suggested that volunteer garden groups be considered. D. Muth indicated some drawings of past gardens are available but the time period of the gardens would have to be determined. It was noted that a local artist did a painting, which could be used as a reference.

Several task force members questioned the unmowed grass growing near the monument. It was noted that the current lawn equipment has limitations in excessive wet ground conditions. New lawn equipment, which is better suited for maintenance of lawns in wet climate, is on-order and due to arrive shortly.

Riverfront Overlook

A river-front overlook was suggested for the area facing the river. Issues of multiple ownership of the riverfront property need to be resolved include the Corps of Engineers, the St. Bernard Levee District, and the National Park Service. Handicap accommodations also need to be included in any plans for facilities.

Sewage Treatment Plant

The group moved to the site of the sewage treatment plant. The plant was constructed around 1958. At the time of construction, it was a state-of-the-art facility. The plant is almost obsolete now but is still functioning. The parish does not have the money to re-route sewage for treatment. On the parish master plan the sewage treatment plant was identified for closing but there has been no money available for the project. T. Bemisderfer asked if the costs for removal had been estimated and if so could he obtain copies of the reports? D. Muth added that there was a request for funding bill presented by Senator Tauzin to Congress for closing the plant but it did not survive in the current 2003 Budget.

D. Muth noted that there are some environmental dangers associated with the plant. Liquid chlorine is used at the plant and is in a storage unit on site. There have also been several small spills of untreated sewage on occasion.

National Cemetery Value Analysis Condition Assessment

The task force moved to the cemetery where D. Muth identified the major items of concern in the report as the wall, headstones, drainage, and the trees. JELA received money to perform a condition assessment and recently received the 95 percent analysis with alternatives to improve these areas. The report estimated the cost of the alternatives to range from \$4.3 million to \$6 million depending on the alternatives selected by the NPS. The assessment does not address the old superintendent's house. As an example of how extensive unplanned repairs can occur, an emergency water-main repair was discussed. The repair costs for the seventy-five year old waterline was over \$10,000 and required the park to obtain emergency funding and state compliance for all work.

Headstones & Wall

The task force members examined several sections of the wall with several maintenance options discussed. It was the prevailing opinion that only the sections in the most need of repair be addressed but that a complete rebuild of the entire wall should not be the first option considered.

The members were asked to clarify the extent of the repairs to the headstones they considered necessary. "Should the headstones remain clean and always straight or should there be some selective straightening planned?" was the main question. The task force members were asked if a set of standards should be developed to indicate when a particular headstone should qualify for stabilization? Supt. Smith was asked if there has been recent research on new methods for cleaning and protecting the headstones? D. Muth reminded the members that with more stringent cleaning comes the quicker destruction and wear on the headstones. It was noted that two members of the maintenance staff were sent to an intensive training program for NPS cemetery preservation standards. Some of the techniques have been adopted and are in use at the present time.

Drainage and other issues to be discussed

Several task force members noticed standing water in the field area adjacent to the break in the cemetery wall. This was an example of the present drainage conditions following several days of heavy rainfall.



Other items that still need to be discussed are:

- Where is the natural entrance the park?
- What is the historic connection between the battlefield and the cemetery or is there one?
- At what point do the individual parts of the park lose their identity i.e., the cemetery, the battlefield, and the Beauregard House?
- Could the superintendent's house be used as a Visitor Center for the cemetery? Another asked if a new Visitor Center was feasible?

As the meeting drew to a close there was a small discussion of how to obtain funding sources. Currently there are two avenues to consider: 1) the Congressional route with the report from the

Task Force, and 2) submitting the proposal from the upcoming Value Analysis Workshop through the NPS and competing with all other National Parks for designated year funding.

The meeting was adjourned and the next meeting date was set for September 24, 2003 at 4:00 p.m. at the St. Bernard Government Complex.

 10/22/03  10/22/03
Mrs. Elizabeth McDougall, Chairperson Date Mr. Tim Bemisderfer, Federal Designated Officer Date

Task Force minutes are submitted October 22, 2003 and will be posted on the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve web site <http://www.nps.gov/jela>

Note: The October 22, 2003 meeting was rescheduled for November 18, 2003.